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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 001166

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS, NSC FOR PHU

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SUBJECT: THAILAND: AMBASSADOR ENGAGES PRIVY COUNCILORS ON
THAKSIN, POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Classified By: Ambassador Eric G. John, reason 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) Summary: Ambassador hosted a lunch for Privy Council Chair Prem Tinsulanonda, Privy Councilor Surayud Chulanont, and Deputy Principal Private Secretary to the King Krit Garnjana-Goonchorn May 11. The conversation centered around former PM Thaksin Shinawatra, his motivations behind launching the mid-April violence by redshirts supporters, and whether he would now bide his time abroad until after King Bhumibol passes from the scene. GEN Prem reiterated his endorsement of current PM Abhisit as the right man at the right time to move Thailand forward. GEN Surayud and former Ambassador to the U.S. Krit thanked the U.S. for publicly condemning the mid-April violence and indicated most members of the Thai political class viewed the USG as credible and balanced in its statements on Thai domestic politics. Ambassador reiterated the importance of Thai political actors resolving political disputes through legal and non-violent democratic means. End Summary.

Thaksin planned the April violence, not going away

12. (C) GEN Surayud predicted that Thaksin would continue his efforts to return to Thailand as soon as possible, not waiting for the fall of the current government or the passing of the King. Surayud asserted that the redshirt violence in mid-April was well-thought out beforehand and was not an emotional response in the spirit of the moment; Thaksin had mistakenly thought he had more support than was the case. All three Thai interlocutors professed not to know where Thaksin was currently or how many resources he had at his disposal (Note: Thai authorities froze 76 billion baht, over \$2 billion, in Thaksin's domestically held assets after the 2006 coup).

Prem on Abhisit: not the best, but the man of the moment

13. (C) For his part, GEN Prem reiterated his previously expressed support for current PM Abhisit as the right man at the right time for Thailand. While suggesting that Abhisit might not be the best or most talented Premier Thailand has had in comparison to his predecessors (note: Prem served as PM from 1980-88, Surayud from 2006-08. End note), Prem viewed Abhisit as among the best in terms of integrity and commitment to move the nation forward. Abhisit, moreover, was genuine in his current efforts to promote political

reconciliation.

USG credible, balanced when weighing in on Thailand

¶4. (C) Surayud and Krit both expressed significant appreciation to the Ambassador for the State Department Acting Spokesman's April 13 condemnation of street violence by pro-Thaksin protesters. They stated that the U.S. public stance had made a meaningful contribution to the RTG's efforts to end the mob actions. They acknowledged that, over the past year, the USG had taken an even-handed approach in its public remarks regarding both pro-Thaksin and anti-Thaksin demonstrations, indicating that they and other members of the Thai political class viewed the USG as credible and balanced in its statements on Thai domestic politics. The statements drew a clear line between peaceful protest and violence.

¶5. (C) Ambassador reiterated the importance of resolving political disputes through legal and non-violent democratic means. Functioning democratic tools were readily available to Thai politicians, he emphasized, and they needed to avail themselves of those means.

JOHN